

Carlos Tamayo
48 years of age

watchman, Coit Ranch, Mendota, Calif.

June 15, 1964

Note: The interviewee was slightly intoxicated, and occasionally broke into tears during his narrative.

Well, look. I was born in 1916, on a big hacienda in Michoacan, near Jiquilpan. They had there on the hacienda many horses. It was a very large hacienda. A great deal of activity there.

In 1924 they killed my father. It was a revolution they had then, a revolution of Escobar. It was a revolution which persecuted the private police of the hacienda owners. The hacienda on which I lived had about ^{TEN} such men, the private police of the hacienda owners, armed with pistols and rifles. And about 700 revolutionaries came, led by Escobar. When the soldiers of Escobar came, the men of the private police went away to hide.

My father did not wish to fight. He was only a servant, a charro. But when the revolutionaries came, they sent him to take care of the horses of the hacienda. Because he was training them. They sent him to the mountains with the horses, so the revolutionaries would not find them. My father did not wish to fight, he was only taking care of the horses, there in the mountains. But the soldiers of Escobar, they thought that my father was on the side of the hacienda owners, that he was fighting with them, and when they found him they all grabbed hold of him and they shot him. They killed my father, there in the mountains.

After he died, they left him there on the mountainside. And they told my family that he had gone away to Chavinda, that he had gone to different places. They searched for my father for six months, and they did not find him. They were afraid that something had happened to him, because there were many wild beasts in the mountains, mountain lions and all that. But they did not find him. After seven months, one of the police told one of my older brothers who is named Jose that they had found my father, that they had found his corpse on the mountainside.

The soldiers had not buried him and the beasts had come and eaten part of his body. My oldest brother went up there and brought back part of his body. He brought back my father's head, and it is buried in Chavinda, Michoacan. After seven months, we learned about itaall. I was young. I was born in 1916. I was four and four. I was eight years old.

When my father died, we continued to live on the hacienda. I had four brothers and five sisters. My brothers were older and had already married. So myself and my sisters, we continued to live with my mother on the hacienda. It was a hacienda owned by some Spanish brothers. They were of Spanish descent. They were very cruel. There, there was no compassion. We lived in a little hut such as they are accustomed to there--adobe, with a dirt floor, and all that. A very hard life. My mother worked making cheese, because then the hacienda had many cattle. My mother was a servant, making cheese on the hacienda. She had to carry the milk to the shed to make cheese out of it. My mother had to work from eight in the morning until eight at night, making cheese. In those times they paid her only thirty-seven centavos a day, and in addition they gave her twenty-five litros of corn every week. In those times thirty-seven centavos was worth--well, you could buy a meter of manta cloth for around thirty-five centavos.

Thus it passed. My mother worked a great deal when I was a little boy. And then when I was seven years old, I too had gone to work. I never had any schooling. There was a school there, but it was only for the rich children, for the children of the owners of the hacienda. And then, when I went to work, they took me to do the planting, at fifteen centavos a day. It was very little. I first worked planting wheat, and planting other things. And then they took me later to take care of the calves. Because the hacienda had twelve milking places. Each milking place had sixty cows. And each milking place had three men: one milker, one shepherd, and one to look after the calves. Two men and

one boy. Very hard. I worked many years there. I worked barefoot. In the mountains. I did not have enough money to buy huaraches. I worked in pure rocks, in thorns, in bushes covered with thorns. All week long. We never had a vacation. Very hard for me. I suffered a black hardship. I remember it now. My older brothers did not look after me. After I became a man, I suffered all that a man suffers. The black luck was mine.

Now then, my oldest brother left for the north, for Pennsylvania. He came with a passport, in 1930. He came to work in a foundry. He made his little fortune there, and advised me to leave the hacienda. But in those times I was still young, I did not know anything. Nothing, nothing--only how to work. My mother kept on working. My older brothers did not concern themselves with her. She had to make a great deal of cheese. In those times they had to roll out the cheese. And I went on working in the wheat.

It was a very hard life. But in 1934 General Cardenas became President, and he gave us land. He removed the yoke. He took away all the lands from the rich. They gave us on that ranch around five hectáres,* five hectares per man. My brothers also received five hectares each. After that I spent all my time working my land. The hacienda was finished. The government left the owners some small properties, but they did not wish to work these small lands. They went away to Uruapan, they started a different business, a factory that produced oil and other things.

Well, I kept working my land. I planted corn, I planted wheat, I planted garbanzos. I sold the wheat in a mill there in Jacona. Sometimes they paid a good price for the wheat and sometimes they did not. It was according to the wheat. If the wheat was wet, they did not pay the same. Some years I had success with my crops and other years I did not have success---it depended on the weather. If there was no rain, there was no crop. In a good year I would earn two thousand

*One hectare: 2.471 acres.

or three thousand pesos.

Later they started the agricultural bank, and they loaned money to the farmers to help them with the planting. One time, I remember, the bank loaned me forty pesos to buy seeds with. Also the bank would loan plows and teams of mules. Sometimes, if the crop was good, I was able to pay back the loan to the bank; other times I was able to pay back just part of the loan. Many men sold the equipment and the oxen which the bank had loaned to them. Also, there were many crooks in the bank, and these officials would take the money that was supposed to go to the farmers.

I built a little house on my land. It was of adobe, of two rooms. The floor was of dirt--there it is pure dirt. In those times we slept on cots. We ate only beans and corn and chile. One day a week they killed a cow, and then we ate meat. If you had money to buy meat, you bought meat; if not, you did not buy any. If you had your cow, you drank milk; if not, you did not drink it. On special occasions they would kill a chicken and eat that. And if someone offered you some tequila, one or two bottles, you would drink that.

It was in 1937 that my adventures began. Well, in 1937 I was hanging around with two first cousins. One cousin was the son of a brother of my mother's; the other cousin was the son of a sister of my mother's. Then is when my crazy life began. I was twenty years old then. We were growing up together, we even slept together, we were like brothers. They also were about twenty years old. And then, arrived the disgrace. In this form: We lived together, we were just like brothers, we liked one another a great deal. Then one afternoon a friend of ours said to us, "I want to carry off my sweetheart. And I want you to help me."

At first we said no. But this friend was very persuasive. He wanted to carry her off by force--to marry her--from the house of her parents. Because her parents would not allow her to marry him. So in the night we took our pistols

and we went to her house and seized her and carried her off. I helped him to carry her off. She did not resist--she was very young. She did not want to go, but she was still very young and she did not resist, so we carried her off by force, off into the country. I and her boy friend, we all made love to her, at the point of a pistol, and any way you like. And we were crazy, very ugly, were we not? We were at it all night--you know what. And the government pursued us. We went to the house of an aunt, a long ways away. They sent soldiers after us. In the morning, at dawn.

We left our friend with the girl, and we went off toward the house of an aunt. We were passing through the street of a little village, at dawn, when suddenly thunder struck. My cousin had been following behind me down the street. I turned, and there he lay in the street, dying. He had shot himself through the head with his pistol. It was impossible to tell if it had been an accident or what. He died immediately. I bent down beside him in the street and embraced him. And all of his family believed that I had killed him, all of the rancho believed that I had killed him. So I went away. But afterwards they seized me, about a week later the police seized me. And I was put in jail for fourteen months. In Villa Mar. It was a prison of the devil there. Everyone believed that I had killed my cousin. Because of a girl friend, or...etcetera. But it was not that way.

My mother came to visit me in jail. She would bring me food, every day, she would walk eight miles from the rancho. The jail was very bad. In those jails there were no facilities, no food. That is the way it was, eh? Very hard. There, there was no compassion. I spent fourteen months there. Then I went back to my own land.

There, in my own land, no one greeted me. Not my friends, no one. Only my brothers and my mother spoke to me. Everyone thought I had killed my cousin. No one liked me. Only my mother and my brothers. Nobody spoke to me, no one.

I was an evil man there. They wanted to kill me.

The sisters of my dead cousin went to consult a witch who lived near there. They did not wish to kill me, but they wanted the witch to put a spell on me that would cause me to become very sick. They told the sisters of my cousin to bring her something of mine, a shirt or a photograph, and with these things she could make the spell. But they could not get into my house, they could bring her nothing. And even if they had, the witch would have done nothing, because she was a friend of mine. She used to get girls for me, prostitutes, before they put me in the jail, and it was the witch herself who told me these things. So the sisters of my cousin were unable to bring harm to me. But even so, the life was very hard. For in those times no one would talk to me. None of my friends, no one. For around two years no one talked to me. And I had no girl friends, nor a single friend.

I continued living in my house, working my land. I wanted to put a bullet in my head, because you know, in Mexico on the little ranches, if no one talks to you the life is very hard. And the brothers of my cousin wanted to kill me too. I always went about prepared, carrying my pistol. I never went out without my pistol. If I had, they would have killed me. Very hard. They hunted me. In one word, they wanted to kill me, but they never were able to do it.

Some time passed. About two years passed. And then my cousin's sister had a dream. She had a dream about her dead brother, and in this dream her brother told her that I had done nothing, that I was innocent. And only then did the sisters of my cousin and the other people of the rancho begin to talk to me again.

I married in 1941. I had known the girl I married for many years. She was the daughter of some people who worked there on the rancho. And my older sister bought clothes and everything for my wife. My older sister was working for some people in Guadalajara as a maid at that time and she had some money. I had abso-

lutely nothing. Nothing. We were married in the church at Villa Mar.

Later, already married, I put myself with a married woman. Her husband had come to the United States as a wire-jumper. He came to seek the life of California. She was a woman with five or six children. With her...I got her pregnant. Then, since she had her husband, she did not want to have the baby. I still had my wife, but I put myself with her. I left my own house where my wife lived, and went to live with her, on the same rancho.

She wanted to abort the baby, etcetera. She got hold of a woman there, a midwife, who put something inside her, to cut up the baby in little pieces, to take it out in little pieces. But she was not able to. And the woman died. She died. And then they notified her husband; her husband learned everything. And he had a brother there, very bad--he had assassinated three men. This woman had died as a result of what I did. It was the fault of the midwife, but they blamed me. Really it was the fault of the woman and myself, because we had loved one another, but as she died, they blamed only me. They wanted to kill me then, but they were not able to. I returned to live with my wife. She was very angry with me, but she did nothing. Because in Mexico, the man commands. The children of the woman who died are living with their grandmother now. And their father, he remained on the rancho, he did not return to the north. He did not marry again.

I returned to live with my wife and I continued to work my land. But the agriculture is very undependable there. In 1943 there was no water, no rain. I did not plant garbanzos because there was no rain. I planted corn, but there was no rain, and all the corn was lost. So we were badly in need of money, to buy the things we needed.

Before, many men had gone as wire-jumpers to the United States, and they had told us of the work in the north. A friend told me that now they wanted more men, legal workers, under contract. That all you had to do was go to the office of

the presidente, and that he would put you on a list, and that then the men on the list would go to the contracting center, to Mexico City, and that from there they would ship you out to the north. My wife did not want me to go, but we needed the money and I wanted to go, and so I decided to get my papers fixed and go. I decided to let a nephew of mine work my land and go to the north. Because we needed the money.